

## Pioneer and Priest in Hebrews

Studying the usage of particular words is a hazardous business. It requires one to pay attention not simply to multiple meanings before attempting to discern what is the sense or senses in a particular text, but to be aware of the way in which meanings, motifs, and images flow into one another, all the while paying careful attention to how meanings are affected by context. Etymologies may be significant, although they do not always have a bearing on usage. The author of Hebrews expected his hearers to be familiar with the semantic fields in which key terms appear. Moderns are not in such a fortunate position. I refer my readers to the appendix on “Words, Contexts and Meanings.”

Basic to what Hebrews says about Christ the pioneer (*archēgos*) is the concept of God as the leader of his people (Exod 3:8, 17; 6:6–7; 7:4–5; etc.; Pss 77:20; 78:52–54; 80:1; etc.).<sup>1</sup> They are a people uniquely led by God. We find a particularly strong and often vividly portrayed sense of God as the one who accompanies and guides his people. The destination is the land of promise. God leads in different ways. Frequently he employs an angel (Exod 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2). At other times he uses a cloud by day and fire by night (Exod 13:21–22; 40:34–38; Deut 31:15; etc.), or the ark of the covenant (Josh 3:3; Num 10:35; 1 Sam 4:5–7). All these representations of the divine presence bear witness to the one fundamental fact: God leads his people “at each stage of their journey” (Exod 40:36). For the author of Hebrews the typological significance of God’s

1. Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 141–48. Cf. appendix B.

leading his people is plain for all to see (3:7—4:10).<sup>2</sup> Jesus is the new leader of God's people.<sup>3</sup>

The key word *archēgos* conveys, above all, the meaning of leadership. However, as will be seen in appendix A, the word has other nuances, especially “founder” or “initiator.” The latter sense is clearly in mind in 12:2, whereas the meaning in 2:10 is different. In the latter it is leadership that is the predominant meaning, as we see from the use of the participle “leading” (*agagonta*). However, we should be open to the possibility that the mention in the context of what Christ undertook for others (2:9d; 2:10d, 14c) may mean that in 2:10 *archēgos* has echoes of “founder.” (This sense is in mind at 5:9 in the statement that Christ became “the source (*aitios*) of eternal salvation.”)<sup>4</sup> But having acknowledged this, there is no disputing the fact that leadership is the overriding meaning in 2:10. In this respect *archēgos* resembles *prodromos*.<sup>5</sup> Although the word *archēgos* actually occurs on only two occasions in Hebrews (2:10; 12:2) the underlying idea runs throughout the entire narrative. It is present in the pilgrimage sections (3:7—4.10 and 11:1–40) and also in the texts depicting Christ entering into the heavenly sanctuary (9:11–12, 24; 10:20).

Where the title “high priest” is concerned we find it used throughout Hebrews (2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 5:10; 6:20; 8:1; 9:11). “Priest” is found when Psalm 110 is quoted (5:6; 7:11, 15, 17, 21, 24); except at 5:10 and 6:20. On the high priest and the eschatological and the angelic high priest see appendix C.

The presentation of Christ in the highly rhetorical exordium (1:3b) sets the scene for what is to follow. It functions as the *narratio* for the rest of the homily. “He sustains all things by his powerful word. When he made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” This strikingly succinct statement, in which the writer moves from Christ's cosmic role to his redeeming work, alerts us to what we shall find is a characteristic feature of great importance, viz. the juxtaposition of Christ's death and his exaltation. Similarly, the comparison of the superiority of Christ to everything on earth (*kreittōn*, “greater than,” 1:4) is amplified in what follows (1:5–13; 3:1–6) and heralds the crucial role of comparison (*synkrisis*) in the main body of the sermon (chapters

2. Kurianal, *Jesus Our High Priest*, 157; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 104–5.

3. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 58; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 106.

4. O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 106.

5. See appendix B.

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8–10). Next to the exordium is the introductory *narratio* (1:5–4:13), which naturally brings on the pioneer and high priest (2:10, 17).

The unit in which the pioneer and the high priest appear (2:5–18) serves to address possible questions that the triumphant Christology of the preceding verses may have raised in the minds of the troubled hearers. Markedly, the pioneer and the high priest are bracketed together in the unit, with verse 17 used to throw light on verse 10, thus providing “book ends” for the unit. Literary analysis of the unit and the wider context shows how 2:10–18, in turn, prepares the way for the reappearance of the high priest in 5:1–10.<sup>6</sup>

### The Pioneer of Their Salvation

The introduction of Jesus as the pioneer (2:10) appears in a passage which contains themes of great importance for the argument of the sermon (2:5–18).<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding the densely theological nature of the passage its paraenetic intention is clear.

It was fitting that God (*lit.* he), for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children (*huios*, sons) to glory, should make the pioneer (*archēgon*) of their salvation perfect through sufferings (*dia pathēmātōn teleiōsai*). For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father (*lit.* are all of one). For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters (*adelphous*) (2:10–11).

First to be noted is the striking expression of the solidarity of the “Son” and the “sons.” The familial language of 2:11–18 is remarkable. All are “one family” (2:11). Whatever their shortcomings, “Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters” (2:11). The solidarity of Christ and his followers, conveyed in 2:10 under the pioneer concept, becomes particularly strong in use of the forerunner (*prodromos*) concept in 6:20. The solidarity Christians share with their exalted leader provides them with assurance that they can depend upon his help in leading them out of their perilous situation.

6. Guthrie, *Structure*, 97–98.

7. On the importance of 2:5–18 for the christological emphases of Hebrews see Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 47–48; Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 214. For a close analysis of the literary structure of 2:5–18 see Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 100–104.

Integral to 2:10–11 is the way in which Christ's role as leader is set in the closest possible proximity to his suffering and exaltation.<sup>8</sup> These themes, already introduced in the exordium (1:3) are now taken up. Christ is "crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death" (2:9). The way is thus prepared for the exposition on the subject of the pioneer who through suffering is made high priest.

God's purpose in making Jesus pioneer is to bring many "sons" to glory. In other words, God has delegated leadership of his people to his Son. The tense of the participle "bringing" (*agagonta*) in 2:10 is best explained as an ingressive aorist, indicating the starting point of God's action.<sup>9</sup> God perfects Christ who leads his "sons and daughters" to the heavenly world (2:10; cf. 4:14–16; 9:24–25; 10:19–22). Müller comments, "God who leads appoints his Son as the leader . . . Those who have trusted God's leadership now recognize the exalted Jesus as the eschatological leader."<sup>10</sup> The thought of the leader accompanied by his people contrasts with the stories of the lone travelers to the heavenly world that one finds in the apocalyptic and mystical texts.<sup>11</sup>

The closest parallel to Hebrews' pioneer is Philo's leader who acts as a forerunner (*proëgoumenos*) for the souls bound for heaven (*Mos.* 1.166). What our author says about the pioneer leading his followers to glory connects directly with what he has just said about Christ being "crowned with glory and honor" in 2:7. The glory Christ had in eternity (1:3), with which he was crowned at his exaltation, will be shared with his followers and that necessarily means suffering. His trajectory is theirs. Like him, they will experience sufferings *en route*, but they are encouraged to look beyond their trials to their great destiny (12:2, 22–24). The connection made in 2:10 between the pioneer, his perfecting and leading his followers to their goal influences much of what follows in the sermon.

The thought of 2:10 belongs to the overarching theme of pilgrimage and anticipates chapters 4 and 11. It bears such close similarity to 12:2 that this text should be interpreted in the light of 2:10 and seen as its development. The solidarity of the leader and his followers and their

8. Klappert, *Eschatologie*, 34; Schenck, *Understanding Hebrews*, 14–15. On the subject of Christ's exaltation in Hebrews 1:3, 13 see Michel, *Hebräer*, 116–17.

9. On the crux that is created for exegetes by the participle see Hughes, *Hebrews*, 101–2; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 82; Koester, *Hebrews*, 227; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 104. *Agagonta* and *archëgon* agree in case, gender and number.

10. Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 289.

11. Appendix B.

journey together to the heavenly sanctuary, which the leader opens up for his followers, becomes, as we are to see, a theme of great importance in the central section of the letter.

Jesus is both *arch-ēgos* (“chief leader”) and *arch-iereus* (“chief priest”) (2:10, 17). This juxtaposition of words is a favorite rhetorical device of the writer. Bengel observes, “*archēgos* is compounded of *archē* and *agō*; and *archē* looks forward in the text to *teleiōsai* (cf. 12:2), but *agō* looks back to *agagonta*.”<sup>12</sup> The fact that, as we shall see, there is a strong case for believing that in 2:10 *teleioun* has a cultic nuance, does not mean that it is emptied of its primary meaning of bringing something to a goal.<sup>13</sup> A similar juxtaposing of terms is also present in 3:14 (*tēn archēn . . . mechri telous*, “beginning . . . to end”) and in 7:3 (*archēn . . . telos*, “beginning of days . . . end of life”). Similarly, in 12:2 we find *archēgos . . . teleiōtēs*, “beginner and completer.”

The eschatological thrust of 2:10 is anticipated in the previous verse. “Jesus . . . now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death” (2:9). Integral to 2:5–9 is the remarkable interpretation of “man” (*anthrōpos*) and “son of man” (*hē huios anthrōpou*) of Psalm 8:4–6 (LXX),<sup>14</sup> although its significance is lost in translations which, in the interests of inclusive language, speak of “human beings” and “mortals” (2:6, NRSV, TNIV).<sup>15</sup> The RSV reads as follows:

What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou carest for him? Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet (2:6–8).

Scholars debate the question whether the writer in his exegesis of the Psalm 8 takes the words about “man” (*anthrōpos*) and “son of man” (*huios anthrōpos*) to refer to Christ or to human beings as well.<sup>16</sup> The

12. Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, III.359–60. Quoted by Hughes, *Hebrews*, 101.

13. Ellingworth, *Hebrews* (1993), 162–63. See further below.

14. For detailed work on the use of Ps 8 in Heb 2 see Ellingworth, *Hebrews* (1993), 148–57; Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 54–59.

15. Hooker, “Christ the ‘End’ of the Law,” 199.

16. In favor of the view that the text has humans in mind see Kögel, *Der Sohn und die Söhne*; Caird, “Exegetical Method,” 49; Hurst, “Christology,” 151–64; DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 110–12; Schenck, “Celebration of the Enthroned Son,” 472–73; Schenck, *Understanding Hebrews*, 26–28; Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 56–59; Blomberg, “But ‘We See Jesus,’” 88–99. The following scholars contest the view that Ps 8 in

Psalm as originally delivered refers specifically to humans, and the fact that Hebrews makes a point of stressing the humanity of Jesus makes it highly likely that the author is interpreting the Psalm anthropologically as he develops his Christology. The same conclusion is strongly suggested by the emphasis on the solidarity of Christ and his people (2:11). Indeed, it is only as a human being that Christ can be said to fulfill the words of the Psalm; he fulfills it as the true representative of the human race. Because Christ shared flesh and blood and experienced death for everyone he is its representative. It was to help humanity realize its perfected or completed state that he set it free from sin (2:15, 17). The fact that he is already crowned with glory and honor is thus the sign that what Psalm 8 promised will eventually be fulfilled. Thus he pioneers the way of salvation and acts effectively as high priest (cf. 6:20).<sup>17</sup>

Ellingworth brings out the double sense in which the author is speaking about “man” in the Psalm and its link with what he proceeds to say about Christ leading his people to glory in 2:10. “The text is not about humanity as it is; it is about Jesus. Yet in another sense it is about humanity too: humanity as it can become now that Jesus has taken hold of it to lead it back to God.”<sup>18</sup>

What this part of the sermon would have meant to the dispirited church is expressed well by Lincoln.

In 2.5–18 the writer employs LXX Psalm 8, read in the light of the new situation in Christ, as a word of exhortation that addresses the tension the readers are experiencing between the inauguration of the world to come and their continuing suffering, dishonor and persecution. His point is that all things are meant to be subject to humanity, as the psalm asserts, but if humanity is understood in the light of *the man*, Jesus, light is shed on how to live with the tension of this not yet being the case.<sup>19</sup>

The members of the church are given a preview of their great destiny. They may not “see” the realization of God’s promises in the here and now (2:8c), but they should “see” in Jesus’ exaltation the assurance that

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Heb 2:6–8 refers to humans: Käsemann, *Wandering People*, 122–28; Michel, *Hebräer*, 138–39; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 70–75; Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 96.

17. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 74; Schenck, *Understanding Hebrews*, 27; DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 110.

18. Ellingworth, *Hebrews* (1991), 17.

19. Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 61.

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they will share his glory at his return from heaven (9:28).<sup>20</sup> In following the same route as their pioneer they can expect suffering since he was perfected through suffering.<sup>21</sup> In both 2:9 and 2:10 it is emphasized that it was precisely because Jesus suffered death that he was crowned with glory, and, as we shall see very clearly in 12:2, his exaltation is the direct consequence of his suffering and humiliating death. The thought of the sermon at this point is thus very close to Philippians 2:9, except that Hebrews goes farther by binding Christ's destiny with that of humankind. God's purpose in his Son's death has the astounding result of "bringing many sons and daughters to glory" (2:10a). How close Hebrews is to the thought of Paul elsewhere is not always clear. The sermon's use of Psalm 8:6 for Christ's eschatological authority is also paralleled in 1 Corinthians 15:27,<sup>22</sup> but, surprising as it may seem,<sup>23</sup> Hebrews 2:5–9 does not appear to make reference to the Adam-Christ typology (cf. Rom 5:12–17).

Christ's identification with the human race is total (2:17; 4:15; cf. 5:7–8). The consequences this has for the author become clear as the sermon proceeds. This is of great importance for our understanding of the pioneer/high priestly Christology and indeed the meaning of Hebrews at large. Thus Christ's humanity helps us understand faith in Hebrews as faithfulness (10:38 with reference to Hab 2:4) and the bold assertion that Christ is the one who lives by faith and is simultaneously the perfecter of faith (12:2). Moreover, the humanity of Christ has an important bearing on the pastoral orientation of the letter. It is a great encouragement to the hearers of the sermon to be assured that they have a high priest who is like them "in every respect" (2:17) and they may "draw near" to him in prayer, assured that they have his help on their earthly journey.

The familial character of the passage is exceptional. The pioneer appears not on his own but with his many siblings in his train (2:10). The same is true of the high priest; he is surrounded by suppliants (4:14–16). Introduced in 2:10–11, the solidarity of Christ and his followers becomes a recurring theme of great importance in the homily (2:13, 14, 17; 3:1, 14; 4:15; 5:1–3; 12:1).<sup>24</sup> "For a consecrating priest and those whom he

20. Koester, "Hebrews, Rhetoric," 23.

21. Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 62.

22. Dunn, *Christology*, 110–13.

23. Contra Dunn, *Christology*, 109–11; Blomberg, "But we see Jesus," 88–99.

24. Schrenk, "Archiereus," 276–79; Grogan, "Christ and His People," 68–69; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 88, 178, 285. On the bond between the Son and the "many sons" God gives to Jesus see Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, 55.

consecrates are all of one stock” (2:11, NEB).<sup>25</sup> Hence we see how Jesus being perfected is able to perfect his people (cf. 10:14 where the terms “make perfect” and “consecrate” appear together). “The common element of the two consecrations is that each brings about the possibility of access to God. As high priest, Jesus has entered into the holy of holies (9:12), into heaven itself, there to appear before God on our behalf (9:24); the believers are able confidently to make their entrance after him and draw near to God (7:19).”<sup>26</sup> The question whether Christians are thought of as priests in 4:16; 6:19; 10:14, 22 will be considered at a later stage.

### **Made Perfect through Suffering (2:10)**

The suffering and vindication/exaltation theme begun in 2:9 is here developed in this crucially important verse. This is done with specific reference to the “glory” to which Jesus’ perfecting is leading and by words taken from Ps 22:22 (21:23 LXX) in 2:12. But what perfecting through suffering entails is not explained. For that we have to wait until 5:7–9.

If Jesus was “the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being” (1:3) one naturally wants to ask what Hebrews means when it says that he has been made perfect (2:10; 5:9; 7:28). In what sense was Jesus perfected?<sup>27</sup> The question is important: perfection, as we shall see, is fundamental to all that follows.

We begin by noting that while perfection has some moral content in Hebrews (12:10, 14) it has other meanings which predominate and should not be taken simply as moral goodness. The writer could not be more forthright: Jesus, though “holy, blameless, undefiled and separated

25. The Greek of 2:11 is ambiguous. It is not clear whether “one” (*henos*) is masculine and refers to God or neuter and refers to a common bloodline (cf. Acts 17:26). The latter is suggested by 2:14, but most commentators think the reference is to God (e.g. Koester, *Hebrews*, 29–30).

26. Bourke, “Hebrews,” 925.

27. On this question and the uses of *teleioun* and *teleiōsis* in Hebrews see Westcott, *Hebrews*, 63–67; Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 44–46; Delling, “Teleioun,” 79–87; Spicq, *Hébreux* 2, 214–25; Du Plessis, *TEΛΕΙΩΣ*, 206–33; Wikgren, “Patterns of Perfection,” 159–67; Michel, *Hebräer*, 137–38; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 83–87; Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 21–48, 66–73; Silva, “Perfection and Eschatology,” 60–71; Lindars, *Theology*, 42–47; Carlston, “Vocabulary of Perfection,” 133–60; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 83–87; Ellingworth, *Hebrews* (1993), 161–63; Vanhoye, “La ‘teleiosis’ du Christ,” 321–38; Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 183–200; Koester, *Hebrews*, 122–25; Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 64–73; O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 108.

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from sinners” (7:26; cf. 4:15), still needed perfecting (2:10; 5:7–9; 7:28). Moreover, Hebrews speaks not only of Jesus being perfected but connects this directly with the perfecting of Christians.<sup>28</sup>

Intrinsic to the meaning of the verb *teleioun* is the root *telos* “end” or “goal.” The verb has a strong sense of completing something or achieving its intended goal. Aristotle says that a thing is perfect (*teleios*) when it “in respect of goodness or excellence cannot be surpassed in its kind.” He adds that a physician or musician is perfect when they do not lack anything in regard to the form of their peculiar excellence (*Meta*. V.16). This understanding of *teleios* is universal. The LXX uses the verb for the completion of the work on the temple of Jerusalem (1 Kgs 7:22; 14:10; 2 Chron 8:16; 2 Macc 2:9), or martyrdom as the sealing of a life of fidelity to the law (4 Macc 7:15). In Philo and Josephus it refers to the fulfilling of one’s personal plans or tasks (*Agric.* 159, 160; *Ant* 10:58). The New Testament uses it similarly (Luke 13:32; John 17:4; Acts 20:24). This sense of perfecting as completion is clearly evident in Hebrews, though there are other shades of meaning.

Jesus’ perfecting leads to the perfecting of his followers. “By a single offering he has perfected (*teteleiōken*) for all time those who are sanctified” (10:14). The writer moves easily from the one to the other, but there is this difference: Jesus is perfected through suffering (2:10; 5:5–9); his followers, although they suffer, are perfected not by this, but by Christ himself (2:11; 10:14; 12:2a). They run their race with perseverance, following their leader (12:1–2), and in the life to come they are “made perfect (*teteleiōmenōn*)” or complete (12:23). Notably, this forward-looking meaning of perfecting is present in 11:39–40.

Consonant with *teleioun* as completion is the eschatological perspective of the entire discourse.<sup>29</sup> This is expressed in the themes of pilgrimage and entering into God’s rest and also in the repeated use of dynamically charged words and metaphors. To Silva belongs the credit for showing that eschatology is the key to our understanding perfection. He demonstrates that Jesus’ perfecting leads to his glorifying and points to God’s declared intention of having the pioneer lead his people to their appointed goal. Always the language of perfection is celestially oriented (2:10; 5:8–9; 7:26–28; cf. 10:12; 12:2).<sup>30</sup>

28. Wikgren, “Patterns of Perfection,” 159–67.

29. Barrett, “Eschatology,” 363–93; Silva, “Perfection and Eschatology,” 60–71.

30. The connection between perfecting and exaltation or glorification is emphasized by Riggensbach, “Der Begriff der *teleiōsis*,” 184–95; Käsemann, *Wandering*

The eschatological thrust of perfection language in Hebrews is illustrated and confirmed by the link the author makes between perfection and the new covenant (7:11, 19).<sup>31</sup> The perfection that was not attainable in the Levitical dispensation is now achievable in the new covenant (cf. 9:9; 10:1). Silva says, “The writer of Hebrews is unwilling to call the Mosaic economy *perfect*, not because there was anything intrinsically wrong with it, but because in the divine arrangement it was designed as a shadow, anticipating the substance. The substance, therefore, far from opposing the shadow, is its *fulfillment*—this is *perfection*.”<sup>32</sup>

However, while perfecting in the sense of completion or fulfillment features prominently in Hebrews this does not exhaust the meaning of the verb *teleioun*. The statement in 2:10 that Jesus was perfected by means of his sufferings suggests that in this text perfecting, like his learning obedience through his sufferings in 5:8, also has the sense of vocational preparedness.<sup>33</sup> This takes the preposition *dia* in 2:10 in its instrumental sense: suffering is the means *through which* Jesus’ perfecting takes place. This view does not suggest that Jesus was previously ill-prepared for ministry or was incompetent, but through experience he perfected his potential and acquired additional preparedness for new tasks. As Schenck says, “These experiences qualify Christ for his high priesthood, both in terms of the ability he gains to sympathize with our weaknesses and in that he undergoes this suffering without sinning (4:15), rather learning obedience (5:8).”<sup>34</sup> Similarly, in 12:4–11 the sufferings experienced by Christians prepare them for what God has in store for them.

The statement in 5:7–9 that Christ learned obedience through his hardships suggests that his perfecting also includes a moral component.<sup>35</sup>

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*People*, 139–40; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 99–103; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 87. Silva shows the idea that perfecting means glorifying goes back a very long time (“Perfection and Eschatology,” 65).

31 Sowers, *Hermeneutics*, 113; Silva, “Perfection and Eschatology,” 68.

32. Silva, “Perfection and Eschatology,” 68. The italics are the author’s.

33. Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 32; Manson, *Hebrews*, 110; Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 66–70; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 86; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 57–58. But while understanding Jesus’ vocational preparation to refer to his suffering as equipping him to help those similarly tested we should not limit it to this but give it a wider interpretation (cf. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 67).

34. Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 68.

35. Westcott, *Hebrews*, 49; Manson, *Hebrews*, 101; Delling, “Teleioun,” 83; Cullmann, *Christology*, 92–97. For critiques of this view see Käsemann, *Wandering People*, 139–40; Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 98; Koester, *Hebrews*, 124.

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This is not to say that Jesus' learning obedience necessarily implies a prior disobedience. The thought rather is of obedience of a fuller degree.<sup>36</sup> Cullmann reasons that since Jesus was a fully human being and had experienced temptation and fear of suffering he must be understood as having developed morally, notwithstanding the fact that he did not sin (4:15; cf. 9:14). He says "This (being made perfect) happens in a really human life—in Jesus, the High Priest, who is made perfect; and in the brothers, the sanctified, who are made perfect by him (Heb. 2:11)."<sup>37</sup> But one would be hard-pressed to find in Hebrews evidence that the writer is interested in Jesus' moral development.<sup>38</sup> However, if we follow Ellingworth and take the perfecting of Jesus, not in the negative sense of the removal of moral imperfection (9:9; 10:1–2), but positively for successfully enduring the sufferings that tested his vocation and repelling sinful onslaughts, we can attribute an ethical dimension to his perfecting. Thus Christ qualified to be appointed high priest (*prosagoreuein*) (5:10).<sup>39</sup> His perfecting is his integrity when confronted by every kind of assault, thus contributing to his integrity.<sup>40, 41</sup>

Not very different from the foregoing interpretation of 5:7–10 is the view that takes the perfecting of Jesus to be his personal growth and developing maturity.<sup>42</sup> In so far as Jesus was truly human he experienced human growth and development. The experiences mentioned in 5:7–8 are taken as evidence of his learning process. Spicq says that Jesus acquired "an enriching psychological experience, a practical comprehen-

36. Wikgren, "Patterns of Perfection," 165.

37. Cullmann, *Christology*, 93.

38. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 188; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 87.

39. Ellingworth, *Hebrews* (1993), 163. Delling, in support of his argument for believing that the perfecting of Jesus has an ethical meaning, writes, "As the one who has shown Himself completely innocent by doing God's will (10:7), He is qualified for actual discharge of the high-priestly office" ("Teleioun," 83).

40. Hughes, *Hebrews*, 187–88.

41. Since the Qumran scrolls take holiness as synonymous with perfection one naturally asks whether the moral nuance some scholars see in Heb 5:7–9 bears any relation to what we find in the scrolls. The members of the community are repeatedly exhorted to "walk in perfection" (1 QS 2:2; 3:9–10; 8:1; 9:2; 1QH 1:16; 4:31–32; 1 QM 14:7; etc.). However, the basic orientation of the idea of perfection at Qumran rules this out. It means walking according to the law. In Hebrews it is Jesus Christ who perfects his followers; "the law made nothing perfect" (7:19).

42. On theories of personal growth see Rengstorf, "Manthanein," 411; Motyer, *Discovering Hebrews*, 71. See criticism of this view by Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 93–96; Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 187–88.

sion and an appreciation of suffering which was indispensable for him to sympathize as priest with those who are his brothers.<sup>43</sup> But it cannot be said that there is anything in Hebrews that suggests Jesus' psychological development was of interest to the author. In any case, the verbs used for Jesus' perfecting are passives, with God as the implied active subject.<sup>44</sup>

A cultic nuance in Jesus' perfecting may also be present in 2:10–11. The LXX uses *teleioun* for the consecrating of a priest (Exod 29:9, 29, 33, 35; Lev 4:5; 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; Num 3:3).<sup>45</sup> The sacrifice of the ram at the time when Aaron and his sons began their priestly office is called "the flesh for the ordination" (*tēs teleiōseōs*) (Exod 29:34), and the ram itself is referred to as the "ram of ordination" (*teleiōseōs*) (Exod 29:27) or simply "perfection" (*teleiōsis*) (29:22; cf. 29:26, 27, 31; Lev 8:22, 28, 29, 31). The Semitic idiom means "to fill the hands" (*teleioun tas cheiras*). Occasionally this idiomatic expression is dropped, as in Lev 21:10,<sup>46</sup> and in Exod 29:33 the underlying meaning is clarified by the verb "sanctify" (*hagiazein*), "to consecrate or qualify for priestly service."

The use of *teleioun* for priestly consecration in Hebrews 2:10 is seen by a number of scholars.<sup>47</sup> This is an attractive suggestion. It resonates well with the emphasis on Christ as high priest and the parallel between Christ and Aaron. It has its critics who argue we do not have the evidence that *teleioun* was used uniformly in a cultic sense.<sup>48</sup> However, there is no gainsaying the fact that in certain texts it had this meaning (Exod 29:9; cf. Lev 21:10). The fact that the accounts of the consecration of priests involved moral cleansing (Exod 29:10–21; Lev 8:14–24) may be considered to be a problem for this interpretation: Jesus was without sin (4:15).

43. Spicq, *Hébreux* 2, 117.

44. Cf. e.g., Kurianal, *Jesus Our High Priest*, 230–33.

45. For example, Delling, "Teleioun," 80–83; Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester*, 40, 47–48; Cullmann, *Christology*, 92; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 57–58; Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 188–94.

46. On which see Delling, "Teleioun," 82; Du Plessis, *TEΛΕΙΟΣ*, 213; Ellingworth, *Hebrews* (1993), 162.

47. Du Plessis, *TEΛΕΙΟΣ*, 94–103, 121, 213–15; Delling, "Teleioun," 82–84; Bourke, "Hebrews," 925; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 57.

48. Peterson questions whether *teleioun* translates a Hebrew expression for the consecration or ordination of a priest (*Hebrews and Perfection*, 27, 47). See also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 85; Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 188–94; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 101. Cf. Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest*, 165–66.

## Pioneer and Priest

However, as Silva points out, authors are free in their use of analogies and metaphors to use or ignore whatever aspects they wish.<sup>49</sup>

A deciding factor is the use of “the one who sanctifies” (*ho hagiázōn*) in 2:11a. In Israel’s cult worshippers were sanctified or consecrated to God in order to be admitted to his presence.<sup>50</sup> God is the one “who sanctifies you” (Exod 19:10–25; 31:13; Lev 20:8; 21:15; etc.; 1 Sam 16:5). What we have in 2:11 is a subtle transposition of imagery. The pioneer image morphs into the image of the high priest: Jesus is the one whom God made perfect through suffering in order that he in turn might consecrate his people (10:14; cf. 13:12), who might then draw near to him in prayer (4:16; 7:19, 25; 10:22) and finally enter his presence (12:22–24). However, we should not take the expression “the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified” necessarily to mean that Christians share Christ’s priesthood. The reference is rather to their solidarity with him.<sup>51</sup>

From the foregoing we can conclude that while completion or fulfillment is very clearly the predominant meaning of perfecting in Hebrews other meanings are evident, though as often as not these have some connection with the major theme. Thus the nouns *teleios* and *teleiôtēs* translated “mature” and “maturity” in 5:14 and 6:1 have the sense of a fuller or more complete understanding of salvation. The same is true of the concept of vocational preparedness in 5:8–9: it is goal-oriented. The use of *teleiotes* in 9:11 looks like an exception since it means little more than “better” or “superior” (the heavenly sanctuary is better than the earthly one). But this particular use of perfecting may well be ancillary to the author’s main intention: motivating the recipients to keep pressing forward towards the true sanctuary. The use of perfection in 10:14 is obviously related to the all-time sacrifice of Christ, but underlying it very likely is perfection as completion. This is supported by the fact that 10:14 looks back to the juxtaposition of these ideas in 10:1.<sup>52</sup> It implies that Christ by his unique offering accomplished all that the Levitical priesthood never succeeded in achieving, thereby signifying the fulfillment of

49. Silva, “Perfection and Eschatology,” 62.

50. Procksch, “Hagios,” 89–97.

51. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 58. On the question whether Hebrews thinks of the priesthood of Christians see below.

52. “The author has framed 10:14 specifically as the answer to 10:1” (DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 324).

the Christian goal, viz. access to God.<sup>53</sup> In 12:2 the artful play on the *arch*- and *tel*-stems (3:6; 7:3) conveys perfecting as completion: “Jesus on whom faith depends from start to finish” (NEB). The exaltation of Jesus (1:3) and his entry into “honor and glory” (2:9), followed by his taking his place of great eminence at God’s right hand (8:1; 10:12; 12:2) and his installation as high priest (2:17; 5:9–10; 7:28), all signify the consummation of his perfecting.

The same core meaning of perfecting as completion or fulfillment is present in the parallel idea of the perfecting of believers. The writer urges his listeners not to stop with their elementary understanding of faith (5:11–14), but to “go on towards perfection” (6:1). This exhortation follows 5:7–9 in which the writer says Jesus became the “source of salvation” through suffering and it foresees the attention paid to the community’s suffering in 12:4–11, also described as a learning experience. What the author is implying would not be lost on the congregation. By connecting their life situation to that of their leader he is providing them with material for reflection.<sup>54</sup> As Christ learned through obedience, so they too have to pay attention to the confession of faith. Included in their perfecting is “the discipline of the Lord” (*paideia*, “education”) (12:5).

Specifically, it is through the death of Christ that Christians are perfected. “He has perfected (*teteleiōken*) for all time (*eis to diēnekēs*) those who are consecrated (*hagiazomenous*)” (10:14). The perfect tense followed by the present is considered significant by some commentators.<sup>55</sup> Riggenbach takes the present tense as a timeless present and believes it means that Christ has eternally consecrated his people.<sup>56</sup> This may be reading too much into the use of the present tense: the perfect is used in 10:10. Michael probably goes as far as one can safely go when he says, “That which is a once for all event (*teteleiōken*) takes place as an ongoing process (*hagiazomenous*).”<sup>57</sup>

53. The use of the perfect (*teteleiōken*) in 10:14 might appear to oppose the futuristic thrust of *teleioun* but the present participle (*hagiazomenous*) denotes a continuous process. Cf. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 149–53, 167; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 103; Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 256.

54. Thompson, *Hebrews*, 116–18.

55. Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 307–8; Michel, *Hebräer*, 314; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 247.

56. Riggenbach, *Hebräer*, 307. So also Bruce, *Hebrews*, 247.

57. Michel, *Hebräer*, quoted by Peterson (*Hebrews and Perfection*, 150). Spicq similarly refers to the use of the present tense in 10:10 as “an incessant and progressive application of the merits of the offering of Christ” (*Hébreux* 2, 310). The phrase “for all time” (*eis to diēnekēs*) simply strengthens the emphasis on the continuing benefits of

## Pioneer and Priest

The perfection of the followers of the pioneer takes place when they, like him, finish the race (12:1–2) and enter heaven to become “the spirits of the righteous made perfect (*dikaiōn teteleiōmenōn*)” (12:23). Although the writer moves easily from the perfecting of Christ to the perfecting of believers there is an essential difference: God perfects Christ through suffering (2:10; 5:5–9); Christ’s followers, although they suffer (10:32–34), are perfected not by their sufferings but by Christ’s atoning work (2:11; 9:28; 10:14; 12:2a). As in the case of their Lord, believers have their perfection consummated in heaven when they join “the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (12:23c).

Having introduced the pioneer the author gets ready to bring on his complementary motif of high priest. He does this by drawing out the implications of the common humanity Jesus shares with his siblings which he introduced in 2:10. By his death Jesus broke the power of the devil (2:14) and set humans free from the fear of death (2:15). The preacher recapitulates before moving on: “therefore (*hothen*, lit. “it was for this reason”)<sup>58</sup> he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect” (2:17). The hearers are now prepared for the historic statement in 2:17.

### A Merciful and Faithful High Priest

Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people (2:17).<sup>59</sup>

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Christ’s sacrifice. There is support for this in the use of the present participle in 2:11. The present tense in 10:14 may in fact have been used to preclude the possible conclusion that Christians have already reached their destination.

58. See also the use of *hothen* in 3:1; 7:25; 8:3; 11:19. Cf. BDF 451 (6); O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 118.

59. The connection of the high priest with “the confession (*homologia*)” in 3:1 underscores its importance. For very good reason Ellingworth calls 2:17 the “nerve centre” of Hebrews (*Hebrews* (1993), 179). On Christ as a merciful and faithful high priest see, e.g., O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 119–22.

The introduction of Jesus as high priest in this verse is not as abrupt as some scholars have thought.<sup>60</sup> The subject is introduced at 1:3c, d.<sup>61</sup> But as is the custom of the preacher to alert the congregation to what to expect (1:3c, d; 4:14; 5:6; etc.), the subject is no more than announced. Its explanation would follow (4:14–16; 5:5–10; 7:1–28).<sup>62</sup> It will have our attention in later chapters. What is to be registered at this point is the humanity of Jesus (2:9, 14, 17)<sup>63</sup> and his solidarity with his followers (2:10–14, 17). These pivotal features reappear when the merciful nature of Christ's high priesthood is dealt with (4:15; 5:1–3).

Integral to the author's creative writing on the subject of Jesus as high priest is his analogy of the Levitical high priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). Deftly introduced at 1:3 ("He [the Son] made purification (*katharismos*) for sins"), it makes a literary allusion to Exodus 30:10, thereby alerting the congregation to all that is to come on the new Day of Atonement. Somewhat more is added in 2:17 and a good deal more will follow, with a significant dimension added when the priesthood of Melchizedek is introduced in 5:1–10. Before we consider Melchizedek in chapter 5 we remind ourselves that the author's comparison of Christ's priesthood with the Levitical priesthood, like his use of comparison (*synkrisis*) elsewhere, is used to exalt Christ and not to denigrate his counterpart.

When specifically Christ became high priest is much debated.<sup>64</sup> The question is not whether the death of Christ was an atoning sacrifice but

60. On the possible antecedents of the high priestly figure and on the subject generally see appendix C.

61. For the strong cultic associations of "purification" (*katharismos*) in the LXX and the New Testament see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 46. Surprisingly, Attridge does not indicate that the use of *katharismos* in 1:3c prepares for all the central part of the sermon has to say about Christ the high priest.

62. On 2:17 and the links between 2:17 and 4:14–16 see Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 214–18.

63. See especially Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 88–89.

64. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 191–95; Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 87–88. Heb 4:14 is understood by some exegetes to represent Christ as high priest before entering his sanctuary, i.e., having made his offering on the cross he proceeds "into the Holy Place . . . with his own blood" (9:12). Those who argue for a high priesthood which began with Christ's exaltation include Windisch, *Hebäerbrief*, 42; Luck, "Himmliches und irdisches," 205. For the view that Christ's priesthood began at the incarnation see Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 97; Spicq, *Hébreux* 2, 111; Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 85–89. Scholer says, "Time and again, the author connects his statements about the perfected, 'after the order of Melchizedek' high priest with the life, sacrifice and death of Jesus

how this relates to his heavenly ministry. In favor of the view that it was at his exaltation at God's right hand he became high priest is both the close connection between priesthood and exaltation and the emphasis on Christ's heavenly status and ministry. Alternatively, the view that his priesthood commenced on earth, at the moment of his death, is supported by the fact that his death is portrayed as an offering (9:14, 25–26; 10:5–10). The two possibilities are not as discrete as might appear when we view them in relation to Christ's perfecting (5:9; 7:16). The solution to the dilemma that many see here is to be found in the author's typological use of the Day of Atonement imagery in what we have seen is the cosmological context of the universe as a sanctuary. Just as the high priest on Yom Kippur sacrificed his offering outside the holy of holies and straightaway carried the blood inside the holy of holies to complete his priestly work, so by analogy, what Jesus did on earth and what he did on entering the heavenly sanctuary are, similarly, a single indivisible priestly action. His offering in heaven is not thought of as separate from or subsequent to his offering on the cross. What we have here are two ways of referring to one and the same act. The complex imagery that Hebrews uses for the heavenly sanctuary still has to be considered but, without anticipating the outcome, I believe we have in the Day of Atonement imagery the solution to the quandary over the question when Christ became high priest. What Christ did on the cross and what he does now in heaven are his Day of Atonement, which our author makes the definitive Day of Atonement by virtue of his unique offering.<sup>65</sup>

Christ in his death is sacrifice and priest—a remarkable paradox that is fundamental to all the author says about Christ's becoming high priest. The offering he makes is the means by which the pioneer priest is able to proceed on his way to the heavenly sanctuary. Israelite practice helps us understand Hebrews. The death of the victim was not the whole of the sacrificial action but the prelude to the priest's bringing the blood before God by applying it to the mercy seat, the incense altar and the

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(1:3; 2:9–10; 4:14–16; 5:7–10; 7:26–28; 8:1–10.18; 10:19–20; 12:2), thereby illustrating the indivisibility of the earthly and the heavenly high priesthood of Christ" (*Proleptic Priests*, 88). Still other scholars think that the author of Hebrews does not give a clear indication as to the question when Jesus became high priest (Braun, *Hebräer*, 71–74); Attridge, *Hebrews*, 147; Koester, *Hebrews*, 109–10; cf. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 191–95. Laub is very likely correct in thinking that Hebrews is interested not in the question when Christ became high priest but how (*Bekanntnis und Auslegung*, 59).

65. On Melchizedek functioning on the special Day of Atonement in 11Q Melch see chapter 5 and appendix C.

main altar (Lev 16:14–19): “it is the blood, which is the life, that makes expiation” (Lev 17:11, REB; cf. Heb 9:22).<sup>66</sup> Accordingly, Hebrews, with the high priest’s action on the Day of Atonement very definitely in mind, depicts Christ, as presenting his blood in the heavenly holy of holies (9:12), declaring that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (9:22). What Christ did on the cross and what he does in heaven are one continuous action.

The foregoing interpretation is confirmed by the spatial imagery underlying the discourse. Since heaven and earth are conceived of as one great temple, the place where the cross stands is sacred space, corresponding to the outer part or court of the tabernacle (the *skēnē* . . . *protē*, 9:2; cf. 9:6–7).<sup>67</sup> The outer part is not merely a vestibule or foyer to the holy of holies, but as the place where the altar stands is the designated place for the sacrifice to be offered.<sup>68</sup> In other words, earth and heaven are all of a piece. One recalls how Hellenistic Judaism thought of heaven and earth forming a vast temple, with the earth as the outer court and heaven as the inner sanctuary (Josephus, *Ant.* 3:123,181; Philo, *Spec.* 1:66; *Mos.* 2:88).<sup>69</sup> In terms of the Yom Kippur analogy what Hebrews is saying is that just as the service of the high priest at the altar and in the holy of holies is a single action so the action of Christ on the cross (the outer part of the sanctuary) and in heaven (the holy of holies) is one action, which implies that we should understand Heb 9:11–14 to mean that Christ offers his blood (metaphorically) through the eternal spirit in the heavenly sanctuary (9:14). There is simultaneity in Christ’s offering on earth and in heaven.<sup>70</sup> This is in marked contrast to apocalyptic thought that makes

66. Cf. Nelson, *Raising up a Faithful Priest*, 79–80.

67. “The syntax of vv 11–12 demands that a distinction be made between the *skēnē*, ‘front compartment’ through which Christ passed, and *ta hagia*, ‘the sanctuary,’ into which he entered” (Lane, *Hebrews* 9–13, 238).

68. Westcott, *Hebrews*, 256.

69. On the cosmic temple see further in chapter 6. For the idea of the temple-structured universe in Hellenistic Judaism see Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy*, 26–36; MacRae, “Heavenly Temple and Eschatology,” 184–87; cf. Luck, “Himmolisches und irdisches Geschehen,” 207–8; Schenck, *Understanding Hebrews*, 85. For the view that the “first tent” of Heb 9:8 refers to the earth and the “second tent” of 9:7 a symbol of heaven see Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 249 n 28. On this subject see further in chapters 6 and 7.

70. Spicq, *Hébreux* 1, 287; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 170–72; Smith, *A Priest Forever*, 111; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 248; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 203, 205, 283. Käsemann writes, “*Hebrews no longer regards Golgotha as an essentially earthly fact, but as the beginning of Jesus’ ascension. For this reason alone the sacrificial death is already a*

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the consecration to the heavenly priesthood take place only in heaven (*T Levi* 4:2; 18:6–7). As Himmelfarb says, commenting on the ascent of Levi to heaven, “The purpose of the ascent is God’s appointment of Levi as priest, and the consecration is thus the fulfillment of the ascent.”<sup>71</sup> In other words, only heaven is here thought of as sacred space.

Very importantly, we are told what precisely it is that makes Christ high priest. Introduced pointedly in 1:3b, the theme begins in 2:9–10 and is précised in 2:17.<sup>72</sup> In the clearest possible terms the incarnation is made the *sine qua non* of the atonement: Jesus had to be made like his brothers and sisters in order to become a merciful and faithful high priest and make atonement for the sins of people (2:17). This is similar to 2:14–15: Jesus assumes human nature and by means of his death destroys the one who has the power of death. The importance of Jesus’ having become a human being for his priesthood is further elaborated, with increased emphasis, in 4:15–16 and 5:7–8. But Christ has another very important qualification for being high priest. It is his offering. “For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer” (8:3). What this offering is has been stated in 7:27 (“he offered himself”) and will be elaborated upon in 9:12–14, 23–26, and 10:5–10, where its nature and efficacy are spelt out.

Before the author embarks on his exposition of the high priest and Melchizedek he pauses to deal with the situation in the congregation. What follows (3:1—6:11) is one of the panels of practical application that follows theological presentation. It is widely taken as evidence that the sermon was prepared for a group of Jewish converts to Christianity who were having difficulty in appreciating the Christian faith in relation to Judaism. Other warnings of the dangers they faced are mentioned elsewhere (2:1; 4:11; 5:11—6:12; 10:32–39; 12:3–17; 13:9). The writer begins by declaring that Jesus is “worthy of more glory than Moses” (3:2), for although Moses was faithful as a servant, Jesus was faithful as a son (3:5–6). Citing the case of the Israelites who failed to trust God and follow Joshua to their destination, the writer cautions his readers of the peril of unbelief

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*component of the heavenly high priesthood*” (*Wandering People*, 231, the author’s italics). What Hebrews does is to retroject Christ’s high priestly life back into his earthly life. See below on 5:7–10.

71. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 37.

72. On the links between 2:17 and 2:9–10 see Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 215–16. At 5:5 the writer is careful to say that Christ did not arrogate high priesthood to himself, but was divinely appointed.

(3:12, 19). The faith they need involves a determination to reach their God-appointed destination, the “rest” he promised.

## Summary

Basic to everything the preacher does to help the dispirited and lethargic community are the twin concepts of pioneer and high priest. Each image is distinctly recognizable and plays a vital part in the whole, and their merging together (4:14; 6:20; 9:11–12; 10:19–20) is mutually illuminating, thus providing an indispensable key to the author’s understanding of Christian discipleship. Without the help of the pioneering leader the community cannot hope to get out of its enclave. Equally, without the help of the high priest it will not be able to follow the pioneer out into an uncertain and risky world. Significant among the features that make the Hebrews stand out as a presentation of New Testament Christology is the prominence given to the solidarity of Christ and his followers. It has particular relevance to Christ’s priestly ministry and the dual pursuit of perfection by Christ and by his followers. Perfecting in Hebrews expresses the teleological argument of the sermon, depicting salvation as moving towards its fulfillment or completion in the heavenly world. *Teleioun* has several meanings, but completing or fulfilling is the main sense. Its consummation is in heaven. Christ is already there as humanity’s true representative. The question when Christ became high priest is best answered in the light of the author’s use of the Day of Atonement analogy. By making his high priestly offering on the cross Christ has made Golgotha consecrated ground. It has, so to speak, become the forecourt of the cosmic sanctuary.